

# *To the Chairman and Members of the Northampton Rural District Council.*

---

JANUARY, 1907.

GENTLEMEN,

I beg to present my Report for the year 1906, with the usual tables. There is, as usual, some little difficulty in making a correct estimation of the population. Some building has been going on at Duston, but elsewhere there has been a tendency when cottages are in a bad condition to demolish them instead of putting them in proper repair; this has been the case notably at Billing and Weston Favell. Before the last census I put the population down at a much higher estimate than was correct, as shown by the last census, so to avoid falling into the same mistake I think it advisable to consider the population as stationary. By this means we shall, I believe, get the correct total, but probably the Duston sub-district will be somewhat under-estimated and the other two rather over-estimated.

The total number of births during the year was 127, only giving a ratio per 1000 of 19·9. This is the least number of births considerably during the last ten years, less even than in the previous year, when they were 133, which was at that time the lowest number during the previous ten years. The average number of births for the ten years was 154, with a mean ratio of 25·6; of these births 66 were males and 61 females.

The number of deaths in children under one year of age, however, was only six, giving a ratio per 1000 births registered of 47. If, therefore, there has been only a low birth-rate, it is satisfactory to know that almost all the children have been reared. Such a death-rate amongst young children is most remarkable, and it is considerably lower than has ever occurred before in this district. Some idea may be gained of this when it is noted that the previous lowest number was twelve (in the previous year), just double the present one, whilst the mean mortality for ten years has been 17·4, with a mean ratio of 113, instead of the present 47.

The total number of deaths at all ages for the whole district was 135, giving a ratio per 1000 of 21. Of these deaths, however, 83 occurred in Berry Wood Asylum amongst non-residents, exactly the same number as in the previous year. Subtracting these deaths we find there were only 52 deaths amongst residents in the district, giving the very low mortality of 9·5 per 1000. This, again, is very satisfactory, and is quite the lowest death rate during the previous ten years. The previous lowest number was in 1902, when there were 65 deaths, with a mortality per 1000 of twelve, whilst the average for the ten years is 77, with a ratio of 13·9. There were eleven deaths in persons over 80 years.

Table II. gives the comparisons between the births and deaths in the three sub-divisions of the district during the present year, and also during the last ten years. This shows that the falling off in the number of births and deaths was general throughout the three sub-divisions. The largest number of births was in the Kislingbury district, which is fairly up to the average of the last ten years, and even higher than in the previous year. The births in the Duston district greatly diminished, though this district is probably slightly increasing its population. The deaths in children under one year of age was exactly the same (2) in each sub-district. As Kislingbury is by far the largest sub-district, the chief falling off in infantile mortality is therefore in this sub-district. In this district also there were only 31 deaths, so that the chief decline in the mortality again is here, where the average mortality for the ten years was 46·7. There were ten deaths in the Weston Favell district, and eleven in the Duston District.

Table III. shows the cases of infectious disease notified during the year. There was a total of only thirteen, which is very satisfactory indeed as compared with the previous years, viz. :—

1905	...	...	...	...	76 cases.
1904	...	...	...	...	103 „
1903	...	...	...	...	21 „
1902	...	...	...	...	30 „
1901	...	...	...	...	21 „
1900	...	...	...	...	12 „



The great falling off in this class of disease is in the number of cases of scarlet fever notified. Whilst 83 cases were notified in 1904, and 69 in 1905, there were only seven cases notified this year. This is very satisfactory, and I hope it shows that the wave of scarlet fever which has been spreading over the district during the last few years has now burnt itself out, and that we may, at any rate for a few years, be more free from this disease. All seven cases occurred in the village of Old Duston. The first case broke out at the end of January, two cases in February and April respectively, and the remainder at the end of August and September. There was a strong belief amongst the villagers that the latter cases were caused by a distribution of toys and books from a house in which one of the former cases had been isolated, but I found on investigation that these articles had not been near the sick room, that every means of disinfection had been used, and altogether the times were so remote that this source of infection was very improbable. Since September no further case of this disease has been notified.

One fatal case of enteric fever was reported from Berry Wood Asylum. Dr. Harding wrote to me on the subject, saying that it was a very doubtful case, but "Widal's Reaction" seemed to prove that it was enteric fever, therefore he had so reported it, but there were no other cases and the origin of the disease could not be traced. In the district itself no case of enteric fever was notified during the year.

The three cases of diphtheria happened in one house at Lower Heyford. One of these, which was removed to the Northampton General Hospital, was fatal. The drains in that house and the adjoining one were proved to be very defective, and when means were taken to put them right and to guard the people in the other house from infection by removing them, the epidemic abated without giving rise to any more cases. I consider this an extremely fortunate occurrence, as, through not having an infectious hospital of our own, we were unable to remove these cases, though strongly pressed to do so. All was done under the circumstances that could be done, by supplying them with a trained nurse, and giving her strict injunctions to prevent the spread of the disease by free use of disinfectants and every means in her power.

During the epidemic of scarlet fever at Duston we again issued leaflets instructing the villagers as to the means they should take to prevent the spread of the disease both in their own homes and before mixing with other people. I also, with your consent, issued post cards to the various Medical Men of the district, asking them in all cases to fill up the particulars and return them to me, when in their opinion any epidemic disease in a cottage was at an end, and the place was ready for disinfection. This course has, in my opinion, worked well, and is a distinct improvement, as previously the occupants of the cottage often asked the Sanitary Inspector to disinfect before all danger of contagion was over.

The only other death from infectious disease was a case of whooping cough in an infant at Weston Favell, but the disease was not very prevalent during the year.

There were only two deaths from diarrhoea reported during the year, both in children under one year of age—one in the Duston district, the other in the Kislingbury district.

Two deaths from tubercular disease, eight from cancer, and seven from diseases of the respiratory organs were recorded. In the previous year there were six from tubercular disease, six from cancer, and ten from diseases of the respiratory organs. The diminution in the deaths from tubercular disease is very satisfactory.

The sewage scheme at Duston is working satisfactorily, but there have been many complaints during the year of the very bad smells from the few ventilators that are now open. I can, myself, bear witness that this complaint is a valid one. When the sewers were first laid a number of open gratings were provided in the road for ventilation. The children, however, played about them and put things down them which tended to cause a blockage, so most of them have been replaced by solid gratings, and consequently a very bad smell arises from the two remaining ventilators. A scheme is now proposed, and has partly been carried out, by which all the road gratings will be made impervious to air, and two or more tall ventilators will be fixed in the main street, whilst a large iron grating will be put into the field near the entrance of the sewer into the tank. If these measures are carried out, and at the same time more effectual means are taken to flush the sewers, which can easily be done with the improved water supply, I think all complaints will be remedied, and the sewage system of this village will be put on a satisfactory basis.

The effluents from the septic tanks at Bugbrooke and Harpole have worked satisfactorily, and no complaint has been made of the Weston Favell sewers.

The scheme for supplying Duston with water by the Northampton Town Council has been partly carried out. The pipes have been laid, and the water is now pumped up to the village twice a day, but the reservoir has not yet been taken in hand, so that at present there can be no constant supply for the village. I think no time should be lost in proceeding with these works.

The water supply at Kislingbury and Lower Heyford proves very satisfactory, and these villages have a very good water supply. At Kislingbury during last summer there was a complaint of the waste of water, because the villagers wedged the stand pipes so that the water ran away to supply some fields which were short of water. Since they have been threatened with prosecution for this offence the practice has stopped.

No necessity has arisen under the Midwives Act to disinfect clothing, &c., after cases of puerperal fever, and the number of cases of infectious disease have been so few that we have not often utilized the arrangement with the Northampton Town Council to disinfect contaminated bedding and other articles after infectious disease.

The dairies and cowsheds have been periodically visited by the Sanitary Inspector, and a detailed report given twice a year. There can be no doubt that of late years there has been a great improvement in this class of building, and much more cleanliness is enforced.

A return is given of the work done by the Sanitary Inspector under the Factories and Workshops Act. There are only two factories, and the workshops are small isolated buildings in which two or more members of a family, as a rule, work at bootmaking. 228 visits have been made. When necessary, notices have been served, and in every instance the defect has been at once remedied.

The bakehouses are clean, and care is taken that they are regularly cleaned and whitewashed; there are no underground bakehouses.

I am, Gentlemen,

Yours faithfully,

G. H. PERCIVAL, M.B.,

Medical Officer of Health.

